

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Bill Harris, and I represent House District 30, which includes all of Garfield and Petroleum Counties, and a large portion of both Fergus and McCone Counties. Today I bring to you HB 507. [Read Bill Title]

The purpose of this bill is to designate and clarify the description and management authority of bison in Montana. Current law describes bison as both wild and domestic, leaving management authority confusing causing many disputes.

- A. This bill clearly describes wild bison as Yellowstone Park bison including their time spent in IBMP management agreement areas. IBMP management areas are limited and must have an approved plan to change. These bison are under Fish, Wildlife and Parks management and subject to hunting according to their rules.
- B. Indian tribes are free to run bison on reservations according to their own rule making. They can accept wild bison from the park herd or run domestic bison.
- C. All bison in Montana not included in the above categories are described as Livestock and are managed by the Department of Livestock. Every bison in this category is under ownership. This includes individual ownership or Fish, Wildlife and Parks ownership. Any bison in Montana in this category not claimed by ownership will be described as Astray. These animals, under Astray laws, will be dealt with according to State Statute. All health and movement management will be enforced by the Department of Livestock.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks, following legislative direction and fencing and health regulation set forth by the Department of Livestock, may establish managed areas within the state and declare wild the bison in those areas, while within these guidelines. However, if these bison are found outside the management areas, they are then considered livestock and Astray, belonging to Fish, Wildlife and Parks but under enforcement rules of the Department of Livestock.

This bison management plan simplifies and clarifies how Montana can move forward with a fresh approach to dealing with a complex problem. This plan brings everyone to the table. Bison enthusiasts, hunters, property rights advocates, livestock owners of cattle and bison, history enthusiasts, and rural citizens.



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IBMP Western Management Area

